

Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 09326 231839Z

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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SUBJECT: LABOR CONFERENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA

REF: EC BRUSSELS 8955

1. AN INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA, HELD IN BRUSSELS SEPTEMBER 21 TO ADOPT "CONCRETE AND CONCERTED MEASURES" IN SUPPORT OF SOUTH AFRICAN WORKERS, AGREED ON THE NEED FOR "AN IMMEDIATE DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY" BUT NOT ON WHAT THAT DEMONSTRATION SHOULD BE. A DRAFT PRESS COMMUNIQUE PREPARED FOR THE CONFERENCE, CO-SPONSORED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS (ICFTU) AND THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR (WCL), PROPOSED ACTION "SUCH AS THE GROUNDING OF SOUTH AFRICAN AIRCRAFT AND SHIPS," BUT AFTER DISCUSSION THOSE WORDS WERE STRICKEN FROM THE TEXT. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE SIMPLY ASKED THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE ICFTU AND THE WCL "TO DECIDE UPON A WELL-DEFINED PERIOD OF SPECIFIC SOLIDARITY ACTION."

2. APART FROM OFFICIALS FROM THE ICFTU AND THE WCL

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PAGE 02 EC BRU 09326 231839Z

HEADQUARTERS, 29 PERSONS ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE, A

TURN-OUT SOMEWHAT SMALLER THAN THE SPONSORS HAD EXPECTED. OF THE THREE POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVES IN ATTENDANCE, THE HIGHEST RANKING WAS THE CHAIRMAN OF ICELAND'S SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, BENEDIKT GRONDAL; THE OTHER TWO WERE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY STAFFERS FROM BONN AND STOCKHOLM.

3. NOTABLY ABSENT WERE PERSONS WHO COULD HAVE CALLED A STRIKE AT AN AIRPORT OR DOCK. THE INTERNATIONAL TEXTILE, GARMENT AND LEATHER WORKERS FEDERATION WAS REPRESENTED, BUT NOT THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT WORKERS FEDERATION. AS A RESULT, THE PROPOSAL FOR A LABOR-IMPOSED EMBARGO ON SHIPPING AND TRAVEL TO AND FROM SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE SAVED FOR THE ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD, WHICH NEXT MEETS NOVEMBER 24 TO 26 IN BRUSSELS.

4. ACCORDING TO AN ICFTU STAFFER WORKING ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS, ANDREW KAIEMBO, THE PROPOSED EMBARGO WOULD BE FOR ONLY A FEW DAYS OR AT MOST A WEEK, WITH LONDON AS THE KEY POINT FOR ENFORCING IT, BUT HE RECOGNIZES THAT EVEN SUCH A LIMITED APPROACH POSES A HARD CHOICE FOR TUC LEADERS.

5. IN A CONVERSATION WITH THE MISSION'S LABOR ATTACHE, KAIEMBO CALLED ATTENTION TO THREE POINTS HE CONSIDERED ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN THE PRESS COMMUNIQUE ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE.

A. THE STATEMENT URGES "INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN CASES WHERE COMPANIES REFUSE TO RECOGNIZE AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS INSIDE AFRICA AND FAIL TO COMPLY WITH INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED LABOR STANDARDS." KAIEMBO SAID THAT PRESSURE FROM LABOR AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS HAS MODIFIED POLICIES OF SOME FOREIGN COMPANIES IN SOUTH AFRICA, AND THAT SUCH PRESSURE WILL BE INCREASED.

B. THE STATEMENT URGES UNIONS "TO INTENSIFY THE ANTI-EMIGRATION CAMPAIGNS AS A MATTER OF HIGH PRIORITY." KAIEMBO SAID THAT THE ICFTU HAS PRINTED LITERATURE IN FOUR LANGUAGES (ENGLISH, GERMAN, DUTCH AND FRENCH) TO DISCOURAGE EUROPEANS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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FROM MIGRATING TO SOUTH AFRICA.

C. THE STATEMENT CALLS FOR "FINANCIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO THE AFRICA TRADE UNIONS INSIDE SOUTH AFRICA, INCLUDING ASSISTANCE TO ORGANIZING CAMPAIGNS, EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO IMPRISONED AND RESTRICTED TRADE UNIONISTS."

KAIEMBO REPORTS THAT ON A RECENT 10-DAY VISIT TO SWAZILAND, BOTSWANA, AND JOHANNESBURG HE FOUND THAT

22 AFRICAN UNIONS WERE OPERATING-EVEN WITHOUT
LEGAL RECOGNITION.

6. IN A TALK AT THE CONFERENCE, KAILEMBO GAVE HIS
IMPRESSION OF THE CHANGE IN ATTITUDES OF SOUTH
AFRICAN BLACKS IN THE PAST YEAR: "I WAS STRUCK BY
THE CHANGE OF ATMOSPHERE AND MOOD. OPEN WAR HAS
BEEN DECLARED AGAINST THE VORSTER REGIME AND THE
WHOLE NETWORK OF APARTHEID LEGISLATION AND PRACTICE.
THE AFRICANS ARE NOW PREPARED TO FIGHT TO THE LAST
DROP OF BLOOD. HINTON

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